

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wells Field Office**

**MARYS RIVER OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION PROJECT
Noble Energy, Inc.**

**DECISION RECORD
DOI-BLM-NV-E030-2013-0007-EA**

In October 2012, Noble Energy, Inc. (Noble) submitted to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) a Master Surface Use Plan of Operations (MSUPO) for the proposed Marys River Oil and Gas Exploration Project (Project). The MSUPO was updated in January 2013, March 2014, and May 2014 (Noble, 2014). The Project is for a maximum of 20 wells on up to 20 well pads including construction, drilling, completion, production/operation, and abandonment. Under the Visual Alternative, 27 potential well pad locations within the Project Area could be selected with a maximum of 20 being used. During the fall of 2012, Noble conducted a 3D seismic program within the Marys River Project Area. Noble would use the results of the seismic program, previous 2D geothermal seismic programs, and previous well results from the Project Area to select locations that minimize the likelihood of encountering drilling hazards and increase the understanding of faults which may act as a conduit for fluids in the reservoir.

During the first year, Noble proposes to either construct two well pads (each well pad with one production well and one seismic listening well) or four well pads with one production well on each pad. The seismic listening wells may later be converted to production wells. The remainder of the well pads and wells would be constructed during the following years. If viable resources are found, the wells would be produced for an estimated 20 years. Within the Project Area, existing roads would be used, some roads would require upgrading, and new local and resource roads would be required to access the well pads. The Project would begin once all permits and approvals are obtained.

Decision

It is my decision to approve in full force and effect the Marys River Oil and Gas Exploration Project Visual Alternative, as described in DOI-BLM-NV-E030-2013-0007-EA, including the Project Design Features included in the MSUPO and the mitigation measures developed as part of the Environmental Assessment. All permitted well pads, wells, and associated infrastructure must conform to the Project Design Features and the Conditions of Approval (Attachment A).

Mitigation Measures

Conditions of Approval as well as Project Design Features are included as Attachment A.

Monitoring

BLM routinely monitors and inspects to ensure surface and production compliance throughout the life of the project. Noble also has myriad responsibilities to monitor and report various aspects of their project activities. BLM inspection and enforcement activities are designed to

observe any environmental effects of the project and to make sure that the operator complies with all lease stipulations, Conditions of Approval, and permit requirements as well as with all applicable laws, regulations and policy.

Rationale

The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, exploration of fluid minerals, including oil and gas, with permission of the government in order to develop viable mineral resources. BLM's approval of oil and gas exploration is listed in 43 CFR 3160. BLM's approval of oil and gas activities is subject to conditions to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation of public lands. As a result of the BLM's review of the MSUPO, no unnecessary or undue degradation would occur to public lands during the exploration of leased minerals.

As a result of the analysis in the Mary's River Oil and Gas Exploration Project EA, the BLM determined that the Visual Alternative is consistent with the objectives of the Wells Resource Management Plan (RMP) and complies with federal, state, and local laws and regulations to the maximum extent possible.

The implementation of the Visual Alternative will allow Noble to explore for oil and gas resources on public lands within the Project Area. As discussed in the EA, the Project Design Features submitted in the MSUPO and mitigation measures in the EA would avoid or reduce impacts from the Visual Alternative and not result in unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands.

The preferred alternative for the Project is the Visual Alternative. The Proposed Action Alternative was not selected because of higher environmental impacts primarily to the California National Historic Trail. The No Action Alternative was not selected because it would not allow Noble to explore for oil and gas resources as provided for in 43 CFR 3160 and as outlined in the Wells RMP.

Public and agency involvement included posting the MSUPO and EA document for public comment. Tribal governments were informed of the Project through letters and through in person coordination with tribal representatives. The EA, together with the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document, is available for inspection upon request to the Elko District Office, and will be posted on the BLM Elko District Office webpage during a 30-day appeal period: http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office.html.

/s/Bryan K. Fuell

6/5/2014

Bryan K. Fuell, Field Manager
Wells Field Office

Date